

A

VINDICATION

O F

Mr. P I T. T.

Wherein all the Aspersions thrown out against
that GENTLEMAN, relative to the Affair of
ROCHFORT, are unanswerably confuted.

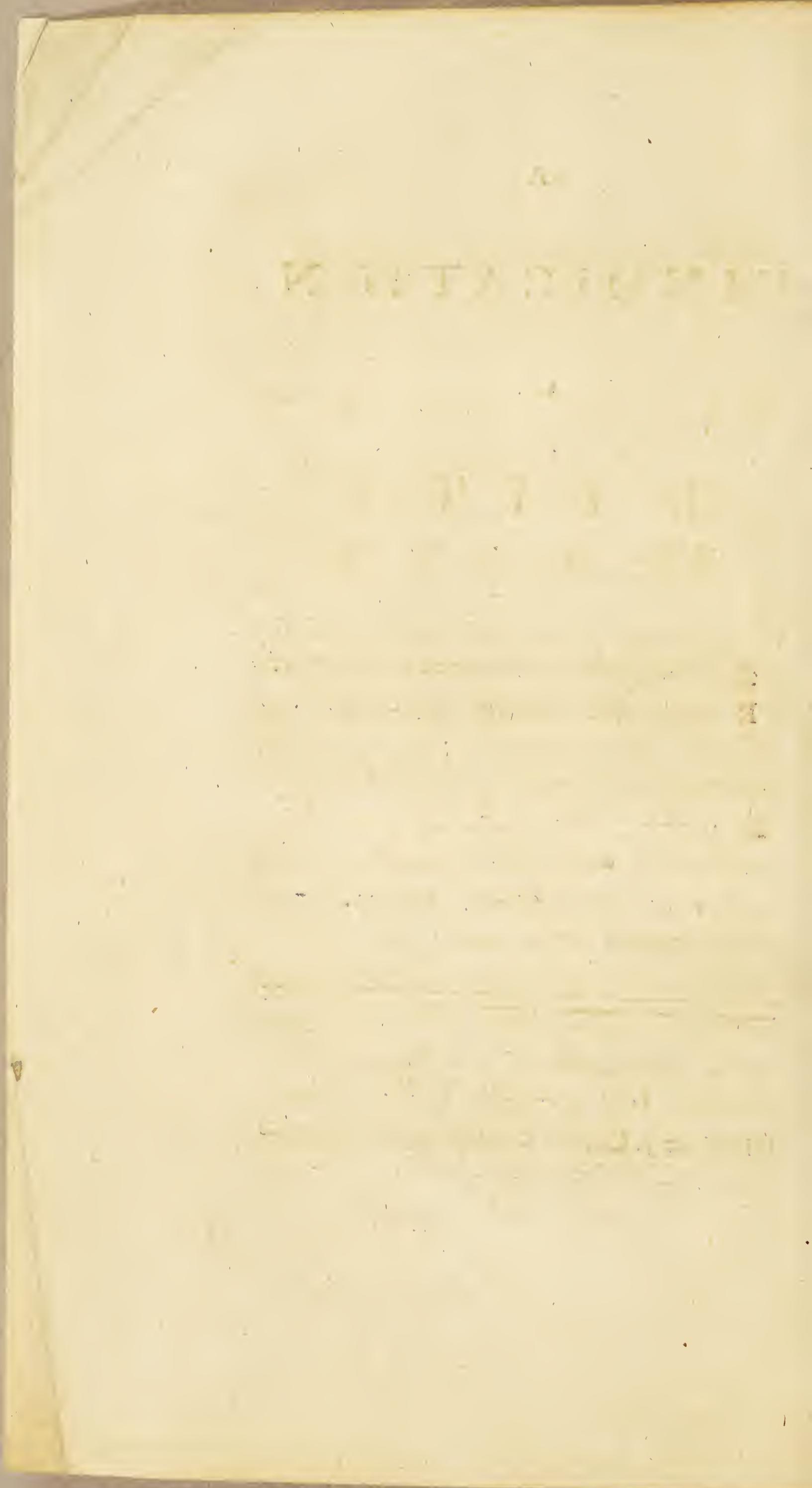
By a MEMBER of PARLIAMENT.

Omnis in ferro salus est. SENECA.

L O N D O N:

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A

VINDICATION

OF

Mr. PITT.

IN the year 1757, attacks were made upon the liberties of Europe, and on the protestant religion, by the united force of most of the roman catholic powers. The head of the empire, actuated by unseen springs, undertook the great part; her influence, though less than she supposed, drew many into the enterprise; and Prussia was the first devoted victim. Those who were to share the spoil entered the league from interest; France from ambition. England her old and her successful enemy appeared in the

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support or liberty ; and Russia, honest, but open to deceit, was led by the address of France, to serve the purposes of this unnatural union, against her proper interests.

Our country at this period began, after a series of cross events, to indulge the hope of better fortune. A share in the public councils was given to a person in whose favour the free voice of the people had declared ; one, who if those may judge that knew him nearly, is not without talents for that service ; and who, if he does not prefer to every other thought the interest of his country, is the greatest of all dissemblers.

The schemes of France, distinct from all the others, even while they joined their forces, had England in their view ; with its connections and dependencies. The German dominions of our sovereign, too much exposed to their fury, were threatened with

with all the mischief that has since fallen upon them, and no alternative was offered but dishonour : our flourishing colonies in America were menaced with extirpation. Powerful fleets and numerous armies were sent out for that purpose ; nor were we left without occasion of terror even at home.

Beside the present, schemes were laid for future contests, of yet more importance. The marine of that kingdom, neglected under heroes who were its sovereigns, was more considered even by the present. It was now upon a foot of power and credit ; and it was meant for much more execution. Yards, docks, and store-houses like ours were established ; and to our shame and sorrow, our own people carried to them those arts of building which had made the English ships superior to those of other nations : whether want of encouragement, actual oppression, or whatsoever other cause had done it, the ships of France, hereafter to be managed per-

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haps by English hands, were formed by English builders. This has been the sad state of things: perhaps it will be so no more: but it is here alone we are threatened. Britons must fight and work for France, if France be ever to subdue their country,

Suis & ipsa viribus—

as the divine Lyric said in tears of Rome, the reader knows the rest,--- will be the fate, if any such fate attend, on England.

With these assistances France thought, and till a happier expedition shall cure her of the delusion, thinks still, and will think, that she may brave the English on their proper element. The empire of the sea, so early claimed, so long and so successfully supported by our ancestors, is threatened with a shock from this new quarter; and what the hardy Hollanders attempted vainly, seems, perhaps, more endangered by this light people.

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This was the general face of things : descending from which to the particulars, those will be easily explained ; and every private Briton whose purse assisted, and whose hopes attended on this enterprize, will thus know from his own reason (not from the partial representations of another) what cause there was for such an undertaking; on what foundation it has been established; why Rochfort was the place; and how it failed.

France was at this time powerful on the continent, and strong at sea in the American world : but rash in her too haughty councils. While she was thus formidable, or formidable at least she would have been to any but to us, abroad; she was at home defenceless.

It was otherwise with England : equal in the American seas, if inferior, where it is much to be lamented that she was so, in her connected seat upon the continent; she had great strength at home.

Elated

Elated with the strong hope of success, she was not destitute in the means of enterprise : her navy powerful, her land-force eager to revenge late insults, and the golden sinews of war strong in her fabric : her people able to afford supplies ; and every private coffer ready to be opened for immediate service ; because the owners knew his integrity, and entertained no mean opinion of his skill, who had now some share in their disposal.

It was essential to do something great : to shew the world that 'twas the chance of war alone, and accidental crosses which had fullyed the glory of the British name ; to keep alive the recovered spirit of our people ; to give assurance to our allies ; and to abate the enemy's insolence.

This enemy who had lately threatened, (or had been thought to threaten) England with an invasion, herself now lay open. Her vanity had left her coasts unguarded.

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The fair occasion invited an attempt : our great ally with half the arm'd world upon his back, requested it, that he might be eased on their part by a diversion ; and it was plain, that our own general, overmatched in the hereditary dominions of his royal father, would receive from this enterprize, equal advantage.

Any attempt would have had this assured success ; but we were promised more. Our force was equal to it, and the way lay open. We undertook the enterprize ; and we engaged with spirit ; that has been common ; but we now joined to it the soul of expeditions, SECRECY, unknown before in England. They were alarmed. They saw our preparation ; they knew it was against themselves ; and that it was what they could not resist : but though they saw the black clouds gather, they knew not where the thunder was to fall.

When it appeared France might be hurt by such an enterprize, the question
was,

was, in what part she might be hurt, not the most easily, that thought was beneath the British courage, but the most effectually : where the wound would be most deep, and longest in the cure.

Rochfort, a yard and arsenal of France, lay, even in their own opinion, OPEN : certainly it had not, nor yet has the common and the regular fortifications ; no not a wall complete. Its docks were full of preparation for the great future scheme ; its foundery was a resource of the utmost importance ; its naval stores with every kind of armament, amassed in vast abundance, lay there : at least, there was one great department of the future project ; of the supplies for the present war ; and of the means of succeeding contest on the sea.

Would it have been little to have seized on these ? or would it have been difficult ? The great purpose of a diversion would have been answered by an attempt upon their

their coast; and the success which as surely would have attended that attempt as glory follows virtue, would have rendered this so dreaded enemy weak at sea for the remainder of the war, consequently open to plunder in her commerce, and in the necessary event of that, poor, and incapable to continue it. Perhaps it would have brought them to our feet for peace; for that peace which it is pretended we must now seek from them.

Upon these principles, and with this fair assurance of success, a plan of such an operation was purposed in secret, and was laid before his majesty: it is said, it was prepared by this particular person; but by whoever, and in contempt of its most perfect failure, it may be just to say, what integrity will say now, and the voice of posterity will confirm, it was to the contrivers, honour.

Too much was not required of those who had been appointed for its execution.

One regiment of regular troops, and as many of a paltry militia ; under the conduct of a doating general, were all the strength of Rochfort : and the whole force on that part of the coast, not only when the plan was laid, but when our fleet was on their seas, was not enough to have faced the troops it carried. The town, incapable of defence, would have been surrendered, or deserted ; and the stores and preparations, nay, much more, the docks and scenes of future preparation, might have been destroyed.

All this was known when the design was laid ; nothing has contradicted it, no not the least part of it, during the course of that unfortunate undertaking ; and it has been since confirmed : 'tis certain England might, without the expence of a bloody conflict, have at one stroke reduced the naval power of France for years to come ; she might have left a mark of dishonour for ages upon this enemy,
whom

whom, instead of opposition it is become
a fashion to adore; and might have
shewed the English soldiery how much
they err, who represent that light people
as equal to them in the field. All this
might have been done without, perhaps,
the loss of a man, without, 'tis said, the
very wetting of their shoes who should
have landed.

The great scheme thus proposed, and
thus supported, was weighed delibe-
rately by our sovereign, than whom
none knows better what can, and what
cannot be done in war; for it would
not be easy for the present world to shew
a better, or a more experienced, soldier.
It was judged fairly practicable by his
great council, and dispositions were made
for it under the care of our commander
in chief, whose name * being mentioned
all praise is superfluous.

Although none doubted of the British
courage, cautions were employed, (as it

* Sir John Ligonier.

to make assurance double sure) that would have rendered cowards able to accomplish it. They were not ordered to maintain or keep the place, but to destroy it and return. The force they carried rendered this task easy; even if all the enemy's power upon or near the spot had been collected to dispute it. There have been times when the English generals, true copies of the Spartan heroism, did not enquire what number there were of the enemy, but where they might be found. But no such resolution was expected: for it was not needed. A surprize might accomplish their undertaking; or they were able to carry all by force. They could not have failed to take the place against all resistance; but none would have been made. They had no cause to doubt the truth of that representation of the state of the place under which they had undertaken the charge: nor had they doubted it at home. To guard against surprizes on their own part they had horse, a case uncommon in such enterprizes; and

and these were that peculiar corps trained to the Hussar exercise of the Prussians, under the very officer * who had form'd them ; a young man bred to the trade of war from his earliest infancy ; educated, in the field, under that distinguished general the great earl of Crawford ; and who will one day shew he is an honour to his noble master. These would have scoured the country for their assurance ; and the very bombs from the fleet could have defended them against the imaginary danger of Knightsbridge troops concealed behind banks of sand. Means never thought of, never used before, on such occasions, would have silenced this most ridiculous fear.

So easy was the accomplishment of the great project ; and for the security of their return a naval force was sent with them, which twice the power of the enemy in those seas could not have combated. Thus was their duty rendered easy ; and their

* Captain Lindsay,

safe return provided. Nothing was expected of them but what common men, not to say Englishmen, might have performed; and thus easily might they have returned loaded with honours in the place of *** but I detest the word, there never will, I hope, be a second occasion in which it can with justice be applied to English chiefs.

Thus easy and secure was the design; thus certain the success, if all had been done that was expected at the departure of those who had the conduct of the execution; and which at their accepting it, they suffered to be expected from them. But it has failed: rather it has been unattempted. We see the state, and true condition of the enterprize; and we lament, that being so certainly and so plainly practicable, it was not practised. Let us do something more: let us examine, and that strictly, why. However important the enterprize was, this is yet more important,

portant, for if this be not understood, and the cause, whatsoever it was, removed, the same will be the bane of future undertakings.

It has been said, boldly, that cabals at home prevented the execution of this enterprize. None knows the hearts of men but he to whom they once shall be accountable; but if their actions and many concurrent testimonies can be allowed to speak against this charge of more than treason, what has been said so boldly, has, at least in one instance, been said also falsely: those who have presumed to speak of private letters, and of counter-orders, have been most unjust; and he who was supposed the principal agent in so ill a scheme, has been no more concerned in acting, than in justifying it; he no more endeavoured to interrupt the enterprize, than to misrepresent it afterwards.

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For the meaner herd that bellow to fill up the cry, and in the muster pass for men, if they have indeed clubed their petty endeavours to vilify the character of one who never condescended to hurt them ; and if they could have guilt enough to endeavour to prevent their country's benefit, lest it should be said, it was derived from him ; they will even in their success, if it be their success, have two torments ; shame under their own disappointment in their designs against him, together with envy at his clear character : and if I know him, he will pity them ; for envy is sufficient punishment.

These, whatsoever might be their intent, had not the power to overthrow the system : therefore the cause must be sought farther. It is natural to lay it to the charge of those who were entrusted with the command ; and so much hatred is there in the world (at least there is so much in the party-world) against virtue, that

that even the friends of these officers would gladly throw the blame upon them, that they might have the keen reprobation behind for him who had recommended them.

I know not, nor do I suppose they who speak loudest know any better, who recommended them ; but whosoever it was, there could be no objection made at that time against the nomination. They were all officers of established character ; and they will shew their country on some other occasion, how well they had deserved it. There was a possibility that opposition might be prepared, and the great spirit of personal courage was required for the execution : I think, if the whole service had been searched, a man in whom more of that spirit resided, than him to whom the chief command was given, could not have been found. They err extremely, who imagine a thought, the contrary to this character was ever harboured in his

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heart, or in either of their's who shared
the next command.

It may be permitted me, who profess
that I think highly of that man who is
supposed to have made the choice, and
to have made it ill, to say, he seems to
have in a superior degree, the art of know-
ing men. Where will they hide their
blushes who have laughed when they
repeated the term HEAVEN-BORN GE-
NERAL; a term applyed surely, with a pro-
phetic spirit to him, who has now shewn
himself the Prussia of the East.

If it should be objected, the generals
had not before been in command ; when
those who raise the objection add, who
has, it will be time to answer.

Indeed, not want of means or of sup-
port, nor want of courage in the chief
in office, prevented the success, the glory,
and the triumph, that must have at-
tended

tended the attempt to execute their commission.

The first cause was, that high and false opinion which some hold, and which many more affect to entertain of France; of the wisdom, strength, and courage of that people: a people, who seen in a more just light, have nothing of the first of these important qualities, and little true of either of the others: whose wisdom is chicanery and cunning, whose strength depends on our permission; for cut their commerce off, and it is over: and whose courage, though it were unjust to deny that honourable name to their fiery spirit, never was, nor can, nor will be able, to stand before a British infantry.

Easy conquests and fearful enemies have raised their glory. We have seen them matched with Prussians; and we have seen the effect; an absolute and a most shameful defeat. So they have been used to appear before the English eye;

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for they who held them cheaper were those who had fought them, and had found them so: and they will have again their antient estimation.

England has no greater enemies than those of her own children, who have represented this natural and everlasting enemy in colours of unjust terror. Writer's, their country's curse and shame, have, from the times when we ceased to chastise this people, represented them as above that chastisement: and what is he, the latest of them, who has profaned an order once sacred to truth, and to good sense, by an attempt to prove, that although they be possessed of all those principles and manners which enervate and enfeeble us, those very manners give them strength and courage.

These are the men who represent our enemies as placed above surprize; and as invincible: to such it is owing that this scheme has failed. It was enough, that
they

they were of that nation who were to be surprised at Rochfort ; for it was therefore deemed impracticable : it was enough they were French ; for they were therefore too strong for opposition.

If I may freely speak my sentiments, I think, that the miscarriage has been owing solely to a diffidence in those who had command ; a diffidence arising from this boasted character of the enemy, and a tenderness for the soldiers blood. They will now see their diffidence was wrong ; their own opinion of the enemy was groundless, entirely : and they will, I make no doubt, restore that glory to their country in some future expedition, which it has lost under their charge in this.

Let them remember how it is the hero of the present age, and who will be the wonder of succeeding times, has gained his rapid victories. True follower of the Roman, and first Grecian virtue, he feels as a man, the hazard to which he must

must expose his soldiers, but as a chief, he knows it needful : he knows they have engaged themselves into the service on such terms ; and does not think so meanly of his people, as to suppose they are unwilling. They who have eat for many years the bread of peace, upon the terms of living ready for war, must be much more than cowards if they thought then of danger. They must see themselves, and they must know the world would see them in the light of the most base and fraudulent dissemblers, thieves of the public treasure ; and betrayers of the kingdom's safety.

I hope there are no such monsters on the earth : certainly England has none such. The diffidence and tenderness of danger therefore was misplaced, to which this great service was sacrificed. Those entrusted with the care of the soldiers lives thought more of the hazard than they who were to suffer it. It would have been better, like the brave Prussian,

to have pointed out the battery, if there had been any, or the worst opposition, whatsoever it were, and to have said to them, My soldiers, there lies the path to glory ; the service is desperate, but it is needful : they must fight many, who would conquer many : and the bolder and the swifter your attack, the shorter is your danger.

Succeeding generals will, I hope, think thus ; or these in succeeding operations, the expression did not escape me, I repeat it, in succeeding operations ; for tenderly and truly as I love Britain, if there were now an expedition proposed which required all the abilities of a soldier, I would as soon appoint the same, as any others to command.

No knowledge is more firmly rooted in the mind than that which comes with trouble. To an ingenuous heart, the greatest of all incentives to be punctual in duty, is the remembrance, that we once

were

were faulty in its discharge. These would no longer pay that high regard to France, which has done us more harm than all her forces ; for they now know it is ill grounded. They have seen a place of importance left UNGUARDED by this WISE people ; they have seen the resources of that naval power with which they threaten Europe, laid open to destruction ; their coast, where it could be best attacked, the worst defended ; a poor, weak, trembling and uninspirited soldiery, commanded by a frightened and crying general, marshall of France ; and all, who, if they had made the attack, would have out-broglio'd history ; and left in his flight more than his nearest garment.

This it was difficult to believe : but this they have seen. Others deceived by the same traitorous arts which misled these, of praising France, as all in all perfection, might again flinch at an imagined danger : these cannot be again deceived. They will expect whenever they lead to the

the attack against this enemy, to find them ill advised and ill prepared for opposition; and they will, to dispel all thought of terror from the soldiers, bid them remember Rochfort. The miscarriage itself, while it stains our annals, shall be a source of glory. No success is more secure than that which rises from ill fortune.

Why should the future commander tremble for his folders when he remembers they are Britons. They know their duty when they embark : they leave at home the thought of danger. They know their own superiority, and they never decline, they never once were known to decline, but always to desire, the conflict : and had the question been put to them, they would have begged with one voice, all to be first in trampling on the enemy's shores,

This is no idle thought; nor are they just who have insulted the present race of

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our countrymen with the term degenerate. Does it appear in any of their actions? In service have our officers been known to flinch? Or are they averse to undertake the task, now that there is the prospect of the heaviest service? far otherwise. Young men of the best families in the nation, seek, sollicit, and purchase the employment: aye, at the price of their whole patrimony. Men who have expectations, and have fortune, give that which would maintain them in an honourable independence, for leave to serve their country. They do much more: they submit themselves to the controul of superiors, who before had none; they enter into a regulation which clips in many instances the fairest feathers in the wings of freedom: subject themselves to frequent duty, and laws more strict by far than those of the kingdom. It is to serve their country; to serve it at the price of their blood: and how are they rewarded by the people? but I am silent --- the reproach will be felt though no words give it found.

Are

Are these men capable of fear? it is impossible! and do we suppose there is in a British army a common soldier who thinks his own life dearer than his officers? we may be assured there is not: herereafter it will not be supposed there is.

Those who proposed, or shall I speak my thoughts more plainly, he who proposed this enterprize, knew, to a private centinel, the force of France. If we have been often betrayed to them; we are not now on our own part without intelligence; and we may say, with truth, if the conduct of this design, which is the latest, be allowed a proper instance, that we have turned the tables upon them. They did not know, nay, did not guess the place we should attack: and he was ignorant, who has said, they knew it was on their own coast, within a certain latitude: I am tender to say ignorant; perhaps impartiality will use a harsher term.

They did not know our purpose ; and we knew their strength. Their spies were taken up, and our method of intelligence ; a method never known to former statemen, and not to be disclosed, had full success.

We knew the number and the quality of their strength upon the coast, at and about this place ; and we sent a force that could not be resisted by it. Alas, those who should have drawn courage and certain hope of our success from this account : did not believe it. 'Twas more unhappy, that they did not speak their doubts ; they would have been assured, convinced, and certain. They took their charge without remonstrance, and felt their doubt of the fair truth, then when it should have inspired them for the action. The taking of Fort Fouras, 'tis said, was a point of necessity ; but I deny it absolutely. That it was proper to attempt is evident : this is as evident as that it might have been taken. It would have

been convenient ; but it was not necessary. They are wise who prepare for a retreat ; but they are brave, and that's a nobler character, who burn the ships that brought them.

Why should any say Fouras was necessary? if necessary, it was to secure a safe return : but that was not endangered by the orders ; and there needed no such security. The soldiers were not directed to remain at Rochfort, they were to destroy it, and return : there was no force to resist ; no strength to prevent ; not to oppose their destroying it : nay, it would have been probably deserted, perhaps destroyed for them : the flames they should have kindled would have most likely been lighted up by the despairing enemy.

The destruction being accomplished, their duty was fulfilled : they would have nothing remaining but to return, and no enemy to hinder : no, not to molest them. They would have been rejoicing in

in their success on board the ships; before the post-chaise army could have seen the havock of their enterprize.

But give them all: suppose Fouras was necessary; does it appear they could not take it? he who thinks this, reads with some other organ, not his eyes: for it is as plain to sense as the meridian sun, that nothing but their declining the attempt could have prevented them from taking it.

Fouras, a fort of no great strength, lay open to attacks from sea and land; for England a fleet lay before it, a single vessel of which might undertake that part of the operation with a fair prospect of success: a second with most absolute certainty. An army, so we may call it, comparing the force with the occasion, was on board, a small part of which would by their very appearance, have terrified the weak, decriped garrison, to have hung out the flag of submission.

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'Tis thought it could not be carried by the land-force, unless attacked at the same time by sea. The events of actions unattempted are involved in clouds; but it appears we should have found this otherwise on trial.

'Tis said, that it was inaccessible by sea. But who is he that says it? Did he try? or did he use the plain and the fair means of trial? These are important questions; and if he will not answer, I and the publick will debate it for him.

By inaccessible 'tis meant, no ships of force to act effectually against the fort, could come up within reach of it. Let us debate this question; for it is of importance. They are weak indeed with whom blank assertions, especially assertions of the accused, will stand as arguments: 'tis not the character of the British people.

Who could best know whether or not Fouras was accessible? THIERRY, most
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unquestionably : a pilot by profession : and he declared it was.

But was Thierry honest ? Certainly. He had been tried. 'Twas he who told the same commanders, Aix was accessible, 'twas he who led up the brave Howes ship, well named for her commander ; and placed her for the action.

This man offered to lay the same ship on the same post of service. He sought and he solicited this duty : he proposed to carry thither that ship preferably to all others, for a plain reason, because he had seen the behaviour of the captain. The man was brave ; for he desired to place himself in the post of danger : he was honest ; for he had performed his duty truly and well before. What could the commanders desire more for this expedition, than an honest and skilful pilot, a ship of force whose crew had behaved gallantly ; and the assurance that the fort was weak ?

All this they had : those who should face the danger, if there were any danger, desired and sought it. The fort was thought needful to be taken, and they needed only look on to see the attack, to see the success at Aix repeated at Fouras ; and in the next advance, that of Fouras at Rochfort.

Would any man under those circumstances, and with those assurances, have thought this fort impracticable or inaccessible ? I will not say, Did any man then think so ? Error ; or worse prevailed : but to the whole British people I address the question : Does any man think now the fort Fouras was not accessible to shipping ? there is none so absurd.

I know there are men that will doubt their reason ; but all will believe their senses. A ship of seventy-four guns of the enemy did pass within reach of the fort : therefore there was depth of water ;

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and the honest pilot knew, and told them, he knew where to find it.

These are the reasons to think, much more, these are the proofs that Fort Fouras was accessible. Now to do all men justice, let us see what could induce any to think otherwise. They doubted whether there was depth of water : Who doubted, and with what pretence of reason ? Could they suppose they knew better than he whose business it was to know the state of the place, who was the only person that pretended to know ; and who had shewn that he did know it ? they thought a large ship could not have depth of water ; and one in high command represented, that a smaller ship was ground-ed some miles distant. 'Twas admiral Knowles who gave this account ; and he is too well known to leave the least need of more authority for its truth.

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But what does its truth signify? What do this, or all the other like representations avail? Did any think, or did the pilot Thierry say, that there was depth of water to the full extent of four miles from the fort? Is it the nature of the thing, or are these places accessible every way to the ignorant?

If this be the case, what is the need of pilots?—Surely there might be water though the unexperienced could not find it. The whole strength of this argument turns on a single point. One question will determine it.

There was but one pilot on board who knew the coast: he and no other proposed to conduct a ship to the place. It was reasonable to believe he could, because he said it; and he was a person of known abilities. There was no reason to suppose a ship could be carried thither safe with-

out him ; nor, I must needs say, could any think it.

The Barfleur tried, and it did not succeed : it was a-ground at three or four miles distance.

WAS THIERRY ON BOARD THE BARFLEUR AT THAT TIME ? this question answers all. This let Mr. Knowles ; nay, plainly, this let Sir Edward H— answer. He asked it surely ? If Thierry was on board, the naval part in the enterprise stands fully and fairly excused : for they in that case tried, and we desire no more. If he was not on board, the trial was not made ; and every man of candor will believe, that Fouras was accessible by sea ; because this pilot says so. Every one who has common understanding will know it was accessible ; for we now know a French ship of the force we have mentioned, with all her guns and other heavy equipage, passed in the sight
of

of this fleet of England to Rochfort thro' that channel.

We must have leave therefore to think this Fouras fort, which was then judged so necessary, might have been attacked by sea; and we know it might have been attacked also by land: we knew its strength, better to say, its weakness: we know it must have fallen; and those who seemed to some appointed more to try the minister than the officers, have said: there where it cannot be recalled, nor thought to be unfairly said, that this omission was one considerable cause, that the attack intended to be made on Rochfort did not succeed.

Shall we declare another and a greater? shame stops the pen that should commit the acknowledgment of it to posterity: the ink that should display the story looses its colour, blushing: it was because some who should have executed, did not under-

derstand their orders. The express term was not in their natural language.

Let me not be understood to reproach the officers in a British army for not understanding the French language! no: far otherwise. But by what fatality came a French phrase, this cursed COUP-DE-MAIN into an English army's orders?

Is not our own language sufficient to express all that is great, and bold, and brave, and daring: it has been the language of conquerors; and it becomes their mouths. We have had ambassadors who scorned even in a French court the condescension of speaking the French language: and is it come to us at home? Are orders to be executed against France couched in the language of the country that is to be attacked? O thoughtless and unnatural!

Nations have fallen by copying the vices of those they conquered; and they have been

been unpitied ; because they knew those vices only rendered the people open to that conquest. We cannot but remember that it was once our own case : nay, that France, a part of France was in the opposite scale. The Norman customs and the Norman language made the way easy for the Norman conquest. Let us look back upon this scene. History is a most faithful mirror : that which has been accomplished, may be ; and if we would prevent it, there is no other way but to avoid the occasions.

We have been told repeatedly, it was beneath the dignity of the English nation to adopt a language poorer than its own ; and from a people whom we had used virtuously to despise : it has been said, that it was dangerous as well as mean. They spoke at random who urged this plea against the introducing it ; for it is impossible they could foresee ; it is impossible any should think the orders of

our

our army would contain terms not of the English language.

'Tis certain we have found much more than the danger, we have found the threatened mischief. What is there in this French phrase our language could not as well, or could not better have expressed? It has; even in those orders. The king of England expressed himself in English on the occasion. What is there in this Coup-de-main that is not said more strongly in these terms, ATTACK, and BY A VIGOROUS IMPRESSION FORCE the town of ROCHEFORT. The words are English, suited to the purpose, and they were worthy of a king of England. He must have neither ears nor feeling, who thinks the Coup-de-main a better phrase. 'Tis certain, Coup-de-main is neither French nor English for SURPRISE, tho' it has been so construed. It means a resolute and sudden shock of arms, a stroke, a blow, swift, forcible, and violent: and can

can better words be found in any language for that sense than those which were employed by sovereign authority? Attack, and by a vigorous impression, force; are surely strong enough, and short enough: I do not know how others felt them; but to me they warm, they animate, they enflame,—even me worn out with pain and with fatigues. If they can raise the languid and the weak, what should they do to those who hear them on the face of action; those whom they should inspire?

Indeed, if the thought could not, we need not wonder that the words wanted effect: nor was it possible they should really remain obscure or unintelligible. They were repeated in the great general's instructions; and he is himself of French origin: it would be poor and most unworthy to reproach him with inserting the expression. Instead of that let us do him and fair truth justice; for he has well explained them. He tells them,

G

Coup-

Coup-de-main was that attack by which Bergen ; that by which Fort St. Philip's was subdued : 'twas that by which we lost ; and I persuade myself, in spite of this miscarriage, 'twas that by which we shall REGAIN Minorca.

Was that, or could it be interpreted a surprize by which St. Philip's was dismembered from the British empire ? the army that performed it lay long there before : it was attacking, and by vigorous impression, forcing ; nothing more or less, nothing other : and even the expressions of the general who uses the phrase most, shew it could not mean otherwise. He says, this vigorous impression, this blow, this Coup-de-main, might be struck, when the enemy saw the preparations for a regular attack : nay, that it then would have perhaps the best effect, because they would the least expect it.

Alas ! we had no enemy that would have given occasion to such preparations ;
none

none that would stand to see the purpose of a regular or irregular attack: nay, they would have robbed us of the glory of a surprize; they would have fled. But they could not have robbed this nation of the glory. The king of England would have been obeyed in France; the docks and magazines, the arsenals and shipping, would, pursuant to his orders, have been destroyed; and the unpursued enemy would have fled as far as they could see the illumination.

That many said, and perhaps thought, when this vast force was fitted out, that nothing would be done by it, can be no more concealed than it can be remembered without horror; but they were English, all of them, who said or thought it: those who should have suffered the impression spoke another language. If I may say what I very well know, France would have given two Rochfords for a compromise: but there were those at home

G. 2. who

who talked of danger : and who made it. One who was but too popular, was thought to have proposed this expedition; and the success would fix him in the people's estimation ; — bets would be lost at — I's, and some who wanted power would never gain it ; for honesty must then reign in public business.

But they should ask how came this man so popular ? Did he seek, or did he court the so much hated, and so much envied distinction ? no. His actions could not but be open ; and I am persuaded, that he hopes they always will, and means they always shall be so. Those who saw were pleased : if the means were unequal, yet they saw the end was honest ; and they applauded his designs even when ineffectual. Thus grew that popularity which has created so much envy. May they who envy him take the same methods to obtain it.

But

What is he to expect who is reproached for having shewn a care of our colonies ; and insulted for supposing an English army would do its duty ? This he may expect ; and this is all ; the applause of honest men ; with what is felt much deeper, that of his own honest heart.

Because he thought France not impregnable, he was a visionary ; because he did not think Frenchman and heroë meant the same, he was a man who valued himself on what he did not understand. Just as because he had obtained some influence by means they never used to rise to power, he must have risen to it from STRANGE CONJUNCTURES IN THESE RIDICULOUS TIMES*. Blush at the words ! If there be so much, I will not say of modesty, so much of human nature in the face of him who wrote them.

* Considerations, page, 4.

This

This power, if it be such, to which his king has raised him, he will maintain as long as his king permit, and his country wants an honest man for its execution : and this not from ambition ; for howsoever it may be their idol, the good despise it : not from even inclination ; for his infirmities incline him to more ease, but from duty. That duty, which he esteems superior to the thoughts of family, a name, or friends ; superior equally to ambition and to avarice : his duty to his country.

But what should he, or what should any man who wishes the glory and advantage of his country, expect from such as those, who have not been ashamed to say, and now even to publish that these generals are so far from blameable for having done too little in the execution of this plan against Rochfort, that they are culpable for having done too much. They need no answer from those who think

think otherwise of the design and the event of that unhappy expedition : these are their own words, and no others could so perfectly condemn them.

Rochfort was open to the attacks of our forces, and Fouras was accessible by sea. These are plain ; and they are most certain facts. None doubt them now : none ever did doubt them except those only whose doubt of them could be injurious. This was known to be their state at the time when the design of the expedition was laid : 'twas this that gave birth to the expedition. They were so then ; and they are so now. No Frenchman contradicts it. What then was it they did too much, who did not make the attempt ? A council of war determined it impracticable. They made this new determination there ; and one would have thought that it arose from new lights, and new knowledge. But is it so ? no man, no not themselves will say it. The knowledge they had,
and

and all that knowledge they obtained at home: their council of war might as well have been called here in England before they set out, as when it was. Indeed on future occasions, I hope, we shall see it so; 'twill be a high pitch of the British liberty: and if the resolution should be such, it will, by being taken in good time, save the expence of such vast preparation. Though the nation furnished it on this occasion chearfully, we know they could but ill afford it.

Indeed the precedent this forms is dangerous. How is a sovereign sure his best schemes will be executed, if orders are thus lightly set aside? How will the nation furnish expeditions, or with what spirit bear additional taxes, if they understand, that all the care of those who govern cannot secure the least part of the execution.

Fear

Fear, nay, what's much more, treachery, may set aside the greatest purposes. It becomes me to say, before I urge this farther, that in the present case malice itself will not apply to particulars what is here said generally ; but certainly it is worth an enemy's purchase, and a high purchase too, to prevent such expeditions. We know that the weight of one voice often, usually the power of two or three persons, can turn the resolution of an assembly ; and we should tremble for the consequences. Venality increases ; vices increase ; and the vain extravagance of the gay and dissolute, must have supplies : who can assure us, that in another age, an enemy open to our attacks, may not, instead of hazarding a defence, employ half the sums their preparation would cost, to corrupt those, who may influence in councils where the designs of government may be set aside, with impunity.

If it be said, such assemblies of officers have been customary upon the execution of hazardous enterprizes, I shall not deny it: it is not the assembling, but the purpose of assembling we are to fear. We have a famous instance in that truly British commander, who made some years ago such an attack, in much less advantageous circumstances.

Before the execution of his orders, which from the state of things were full of danger, he called his officers together; and they began with representing, in the strongest light they could, those difficulties: their general answered; You mistake the purpose of our meeting, it is not to debate, whether we land or not; for that you shall do immediately.—If any can propose what will be advantageous to us when we are landed, now is the time to speak.

Theſe

These were the deliberations : (councils, if it so please the world to call them) which British officers held in preceding years ; and the consequences were such as might be thought. They succeeded, because they attempted : for, to dare in war, is generally to do. Children need not be told, that they cannot succeed who do not try ; yet he needs to be told so, who can say, I will not add can think, for thoughts and such words do not go together, that those were blameable for doing too much, who being commissioned with an important enterprize, returned without attempting to perform it.

I have laid down in fair and equal terms (for I think the public have a right to hear all fairly) the intent and purpose of this enterprize : the state of England at that time : the state of France : and the condition of Rochfort in particular. I have mentioned how essential

some service was at that time, and how able we were to perform it. 'Tis plain ; it cannot be debated ; except by those who employ the very moderate talents God has given them, to perplex and to deceive their country, instead of doing her the needful service ; that great purposes might have been answered by an attack upon the coast of France, and greatest of all there, where this attack was destined to be made, at Rochfort : It is evident this might have been done ; and it remains to say, what would have been the consequence if it had ! If Rochfort had been forced by a vigorous impression ; If the ships and stores, the docks and yards, arsenals, and all the rest that serves for military preparation had been destroyed ; as our great, brave, and experienced sovereign gave in charge : as our commander in chief particularly directed ; and as that day-star in the heaven of war, the king of Prussia, thought it might.

But

But I shall spare the unnecessary grief that must wound the British heart at seeing in review those consequences which are but in imagination. They cannot be recalled : perhaps they would not have followed as may seem : perhaps we are mistaken. The navy of France may be, perhaps, distressed in its first source some other way ; or we may ride upon the bosom of the deep superior, as we have done hitherto, to her, and all her possible allies : unless the Dutch should, at some future and remote period, swell the number of her subjects.

If it be true, that those who presaged and wagered ill success to the design, used all their endeavours, influence, insinuation, and other arts, to occasion that which they pretended only to foresee ; if there be men who to ruin one fellow-subject, because he is better than themselves, and therefore is more beloved, would endeavour, or if there be

be those who did endeavour to thwart the purposes of this expedition, they have prevailed : but they have not succeeded. Their country has lost the benefit that might, nay, that would have arisen from the service ; but in the stead of hurting him who is supposed to have designed it, their mischief has returned upon themselves. The people of Britain are too discerning to be misled by men of such slight talents ; they see the purpose was of the true patriot-stamp ; they see the expedition had in it nothing of chimera or extravagance : a great good was designed ; a force sufficient was equipped to answer it ; and it has failed :—no matter how—so long as every impartial eye sees 'twas not because it could not be atchieved. His character stands fair whom they would ruin ; and they, unless they can wash off an *Æthiop* suspicion, are deemed to everlasting shame and detestation.

The

The grief which some of these express, and with which they would vainly hide the stain they cannot remove, is not of the right mould : 'tis like the sorrow of Prior's criminal, not that he murthered, but that he was taken. 'Tis like the lamentation of that fast-day preacher, who enumerating the calamities which had befallen the land, and which declared heaven offended, dwelt more on the disease which had carried off the fat oxen of the kingdom, than on the approaching conflicts which call for her best people.

If the very prospect of success could afflict these men, what must they suffer now from the beginnings of success, and from the fair promises of much more : the good effects of the encouragement, the honours, and rewards, which have been bestowed on honest service ; and the designs of expeditions not to be rendered fruitless, like the last.

The

The courage and the fortune of our present commanders, must sting these men to death. What must they feel to read of the brave Clive's success, of Cotes's; and of the many lesser, though not less merited advantages? If these are not enough, they may be told, that every day will add to the account; that England is grown, and will grow more and more in strength and honour; and, that within the space of a few months, if human foresight can at any time be allowed to promise benefits, there will be a stroke more advantageous to ourselves, and more distressful to our enemies, even than that which has so strangely failed, would have been with its best success.

In that we are not left to doubt the cause of our disappointment, therefore we shall not be disappointed again by the same means. The distinction between absolute and discretionary orders, or between those which must, and those which

which may, or may not be obeyed, will be better considered, and their nature better defined hereafter ; nor will one half the force find its excuse, because the other half (should it prove so) refused to do their duty.

Even in the case we name, if the fort Fouras might have been attacked by sea, and was not ; if it were plain, even to those who wished it most obscure, that they neglected their duty, who should have undertaken that part of the commission, it does not follow, that the others were therefore excused in a neglect as criminal.

Indeed the better method and the less hazardous would have been, to make the attack at once both ways ; but it does not therefore follow, that one part neglecting, the others should not have attempted it. If it be certain, that the naval force refused to attack this fort when they might,

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and should have done it; 'tis not pretended, that they refused to land the men who should have made the attempt on shore. There appears evidence, aye, conviction, that they might have been landed safely and commodiously; unhurt and unmolested. Why then, in the name of honour, did they not land? Why did they not attempt that which themselves saw a material part of their proposed expedition; and which none prevented or opposed?

Indeed it was more hazardous; but they who have seen war under successful Generals, know, that hazard is the right path, not to glory only, but to success. They who fought under the Prussian banners, have seen things indeed hazardous undertaken; and as soon as they were attempted, done successfully; things, to which such a danger would appear security: the worst of these have been undertaken chearfully, by a soldiery who knew

knew their country's interest depended on them ; and that this is the sentiment of England, as well as of Prussia, the theatre, if I am told rightly, has given proof : where, when in a new play occurred this expression ; that dangers when necessary must not be shunned ; the roof rung many moments with the popular acclamation.

I know it is pretended, the troops could not be landed, at least, that they could not be set on shore commodiously: so themselves say for indeed, did they say otherwise, what subterfuge remained from the most open shame? But who were the best judges of this possibility, the land or the sea-officers? most certainly those of the sea; the others could not pretend to the least understanding of points so remote as the depth of water, and the nature of the shore, from their own business. What the sea-officers thought they have told us, the chief in command

wrote to the person who was supposed to have designed this expedition that it was his opinion, the landing might have been effected. Nor his alone: he adds, 'twas every ones. They had indeed their choice of different places, no batteries, no ambush, no danger, nor no difficulty to have frightened them, unless the land, because it was France, partook that bugbear quality, which our coward imaginations have lodged of late in all that is French; and was therefore terrible.

Their terrors were all of one kind, visionary as this, and as full of shameful consequences. Did the appearance of superior forces; nay, did so much as the report of them shew ours that there would be danger? Neither. Our Government had been informed there were so few upon the spot, or near it, or within the distance of possible rendezvous there, or in that neighbourhood, that they were certain the force they sent was equal to the project

ject to be executed. They told those in command these circumstances ; and they should have been believed, unless ocular proof, or equal to ocular, was brought those generals of the contrary. But 'twas believed without such evidence, that there were too much danger in the undertaking. 'Twas believed, though no such thing was known, that there were a considerable number of troops to oppose this enterprize : and why was it believed, not from the evident circumstances of things, but, because France was wise ; and therefore would not overlook the needful preparations of defence. It was supposed those troops were brave and were well officered ; not that this could be known, for there were none such there ; but because the French are well appointed. 'Twas thought there were men behind mole-hills (sand-hills—I beg their pardon) not because men were seen there, but because there being such advantage of the ground ; and France being wise, it could not

not be but, that she would take it to her use.

O miserable infatuation ! O devoted country ! who representest thine enemies not such as they are ; but in all lights that can render them terrible.

This instance may suffice for better information. All that was thought was erroneous ; all the opinion of the strength and superlative wisdom of this great enemy, was false. Rochfort was not in a condition of defence, though it would have become wisdom to make it such ; it was not strong, tho' it belonged to powerful France ; nor were there of all their numerous, indeed, according to the English account, innumerable forces, enough upon that needful spot, to have faced those who did not make the attack.

If there be a difference in the state of France and that of England respecting
military

military service, let us see truly what it is that gives them the advantage. 'Tis in one article alone they have it; we in many. But it is one of great importance. We must be free to name it, let the offence fall where it may; none is intended: nor is any thing written here in malice; but all for the interest of Britain. The superiority they have is in the conduct of their service; it is in those who have command upon their expeditions.

I hate comparisons; but I will offend myself to place one fairly before the view of the British people. 'Twill stand in the place of a thousand; 'tis felt; 'tis fresh; and it is one in which both the subjects are now so well understood, that there can be no error. Does not the reader anticipate the subject! Does he not name for me, Rochfort and Minorca? Alas! give the French and the English their just title in these two expeditions, and we need seek no farther to know the true occasion of our losses.

Rochfort

Rochfort was weak and indefensible—
St. Philip strong by nature and by art ;
and in appearance, capable to resist a
Bergen siege ; yet Rochfort escaped ;
and England lost Minorca.

Had Minorca been the enemies, and
a force equal to what they took against it
sent from England, under those who were
dispatched against Rochfort ; would it
have been taken ? — there is none so dull,
that he can hear the question before he pro-
nounces the answer, On the contrary ;
had he who gained Minorca for the
French, been sent against an English
town as weak as Rochfort, with the force
which we commissioned thither, would he
have declined the attempt ?

It is with pain I write : not enough
hardened to this trade of surgery to cut so
deep as the sound cure requires. But
without disgracing Reason by invectives
is it not now plain what has been our
Misfortune,

Misfortune, and what is the sole advantage of our enemy,

If any one suppose he who did Fance the service at Minorca has, more personal courage, more love for his country, or more integrity than the commanders, who did not render England the expected service at Rochfort, he does those officers high injustice. 'Twas not the want of either of these qualities; 'twas the excess of another, equally good, with these; but like all good things, worst in the over-use: 'twas the excess of care for the lives of the British soldiery, a diffidence arising from the high opinion entertained of the enemy, not by themselves first, or alone; but artfully: and if care be not immediately taken, I fear fatally, by the nation.

They and the world will see this was an error; and howsoever hard the decisions, may appear, the Prussian con-

K. flicts,

flicts, and our enemies success against us join to support it, that in times so dangerous as these, rashness is preferable to over-caution.

'Tis here, even under the letter of this determination, that the discretionary power of an officer in chief command has its great use. Though we prefer to a cold conduct bravery that approaches to rashness, we do not, nor we cannot mean, an absolute infatuation. We mean that rashness which won Philip's son, and Cæsar after him, the world; that rashness by which the Cæsar of this age has conquered so many enemies; that rashness, to conclude where we set out, which won the French, Minorca.

This he advises, who knows our sovereign, did he himself command his forces, would observe it; for he has shewn, whatever may be the second qualities of a soldier, the first is courage.

Things

Things that appear impossible grow easy, when they are attempted; and every day's experience in war shews, that there is nothing which true courage may not attain: nothing which this diffidence may not give reasons to neglect.

Let any man look on the walls destined to an escalade, in the cool light of reason, and he will say, it is impracticable to attempt them; and give fair reasons, at least specious ones, for not making the assault. Let him point out before those judges to whom this cause is left, the perpendicular ascent, the force at top, the advantage of the defenders, and open and defenceless state of the assailants; and it will appear to all the design was impracticable: and yet, walls are scaled, and towns are taken by assault; they have been, and they will be. The reason is, that soldiers do not weigh the attempt in this cool ballance, they resolve with spirit, they attack with fury; and their

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their very rashness is their security, and their success. The enemy who should oppose is daunted, and gives up what he might yet defend.

Entrenchments carry the same forbidding aspect: and reason would declare it madness to attempt to force them: yet courage undertakes it; and succeeds. Nay, with all the disadvantages, this is so universal, that a late general almost said, whenever trenches are attacked, they are forced and carried.

Here is the lesson. May they practise it, on whom the glory, certainly, perhaps, the being of their country depends.

F I N I S.